

# WILDLIFE

## Introduction

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The West Side Reservoir Post-Fire Project area provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, wolf, lynx, bobcat, mountain lion, striped skunk, long-tailed weasel, grizzly bear, black bear, coyote, deer mouse, western harvest mouse, pocket gopher, golden mantled ground squirrel, snowshoe hare, mountain cottontail, gray jays, nuthatches, woodpeckers, mountain bluebirds, spruce grouse, hummingbirds, bald eagles, doves, hawks, owls, ravens, various bats, snakes, and many other species (Exhibits Q-6, Rg-6, and Rn-4). The distributions and abundances of wildlife populations are largely influenced by spatial arrangement, size, and specific conditions of habitat areas.

The wildlife analysis addresses wildlife habitat and specific required components in the West Side Reservoir Post-Fire Project area. Wildlife species and habitat will be evaluated in relation to the existing condition, and the potential conditions resulting from the proposed alternatives. The size and location of the area analyzed will vary with each species habitat needs. The forest plan lists as Management Indicator Species all threatened and endangered species, sensitive species, and big game species including elk, mule deer, and white-tailed deer. These species and their associated habitat characteristics will be addressed in their appropriate sections. The bald eagle, Canada lynx, gray wolf, and grizzly bear are the threatened species occurring in or potentially occurring in the project area. Sensitive species identified for the Flathead National Forest occurring in or potentially occurring in the project area include the black-backed woodpecker, boreal toad, fisher, northern goshawk, Townsend's big-eared bat, and wolverine.

Old growth and snags and downed wood are unique habitats that fulfill key habitat components and general habitat requirements for many wildlife species. Considerable acreages of old growth burned in the 2003 fires and some intact old growth remains within the analysis area. Both old growth and snags and downed wood are potentially affected by the proposed alternatives, and will be analyzed in separate sections. Neotropical migratory birds are addressed in a separate section that includes an analysis of riparian habitats.

Wildlife species in this area have evolved in fire-influenced ecosystems, and even stand-replacement fire is critical for the long-term survival of some species (Bunnell 1994, Caton 1996, Dixon and Saab 2000, Greenlee 1995, Hutto 1995, Saab and Dudley 1998). The proposed action contains two basic kinds of forest management activities that can affect wildlife habitat and wildlife use of habitat: 1) removal of dead and dying trees, and 2) access management. The methods of salvage (i.e. ground-based versus helicopter) can have effects on wildlife particular to each method. In this context, Tables 3-83 and 3-84 provide a synopsis of historical and current management indicator species (MIS) distributions at the sub-basin, sub-watershed, and project area scales, and was used to determine which species to carry forward into the analysis.

**Table 3-83. Historic and known current presence of wildlife Management Indicator Species and habitats within the West Side Reservoir Post-fire Project affected area, Flathead National Forest.**

Species	Status	Historical Presence			Current Presence		
		South Fork Sub-Basin	Sub-Watersheds	Project Area	South Fork Sub-Basin	Sub-Watersheds	Project Area
Bald Eagle	Threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grizzly Bear	Threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gray Wolf	Threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Probable
Canada Lynx	Threatened	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Peregrine Falcon	Recently Delisted; Sensitive	Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely
Flammulated Owl	Sensitive	Yes	Unknown	Unknown	Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely
Harlequin Duck	Sensitive	Yes	Probable	Probable	Yes	Probable	Probable
Common Loon	Sensitive	Yes	Unlikely	No	Yes	Unlikely	No
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Sensitive	Probable	Unknown	Unknown	Probable	Unlikely	Unlikely
Black-backed Woodpecker	Sensitive	Yes	Probable	Probable	Yes	Probable	Probable
Wolverine	Sensitive	Yes	Yes	Probable	Yes	Yes	Probable
Fisher	Sensitive	Yes	Probable	Probable	Yes	Probable	Unlikely
Northern Goshawk	Sensitive	Yes	Probable	Probable	Yes	Probable	Unlikely
Northern Leopard Frog	Sensitive	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely
Boreal Toad	Sensitive	Yes	Yes	Probable	Yes	Yes	Probable
Northern Bog Lemming	Sensitive	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely
Elk, Mule Deer, and White-tailed Deer	Management Indicator Species	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Neotropical Migrant Birds		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Old Growth Species		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snags & Down Wood Habitat Species		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Table 3-84: Species-specific habitat occurrence and other issues related to the West Side Reservoir Post-fire Project affected area, Flathead National Forest.**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Habitat Comments and Issues Related to Project Area</b>
Bald Eagle	An active nest exists on an island in Hungry Horse Reservoir near the Blackfoot fire perimeter; fish and carrion provide a food source.
Grizzly Bear	Access management does not meet Forest Plan Amendment 19 direction. Fire reduced security cover.
Gray Wolf	Spotted Bear pack over laps a portion of the Ball fire area (south end of project area).
Canada Lynx	Much of the pre-fire habitat in the area is now burned and considered unsuitable. Some suitable habitat is adjacent.
Peregrine Falcon	No nesting activity has been documented in the project area; potential foraging habitat is likely present.
Flammulated Owl	Single story ponderosa or Douglas-fir old growth with open understory is rare to absent in the area.
Harlequin Duck	Harlequin ducks have been observed in Sullivan and Wounded Buck Creeks.
Common Loon	No known breeding habitat for this species in or adjacent to the project area.
Townsend's Big-eared Bat	No known potential communal roosting habitat is known in the area.
Black-backed Woodpecker	Habitat including recent post-fire snags and beetle populations are present in the project area.
Wolverine	It is likely that an occasional individual passes through, and is possible that portions of home range(s) occur in the area.
Fisher	A recently severely burned environment is generally unsuitable habitat, habitat does occur in adjacent areas.
Northern Goshawk	Mature and old growth nesting habitat occurs in and adjacent to project area; some foraging habitat exists in the project area.
Northern Leopard Frog	Rare and apparently declining in Western Montana. No reports in or near project area. Occurs in or near water in non-forest habitats.
Boreal Toad	Breeding habitat occurs in lakes, ponds, slow streams, and ditches. Observed in project area.
Northern Bog Lemming	Limited potential habitat within the proposed salvage area; no sightings in the greater area, known occupied habitat outside the area is protected.
Elk, Mule Deer, and White-tailed Deer	Year round use occurs, with some burned winter range in the project area.
Neotropical Migrant Birds	Habitat exists in and adjacent to the fire areas for a suite of Neotropical migratory birds.
Old Growth Habitat Species	No current old growth known in salvage units. Much of the old growth that burned no longer meets habitat criteria. Varying amounts of associated attributes occur in burned area mosaic.
Snags & Down Wood Habitat Species	Abundant large diameter snags, and current and future down wood in project area.

Prior to the preparation of this document, a review was conducted of District and Forest wildlife records, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) list of Federally Threatened and Endangered species on the Flathead National Forest (Exhibit Rt-1), the USFS Region 1 Sensitive Species List, and the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks website. Post-fire field reviews were done during the fall of 2003, and the spring and summer of 2004. Field survey data was also utilized from various other surveys done within the West Side Reservoir Post-fire Project area and surrounding vicinity (Exhibit Sections Q and R).

Data used in this analysis included pre- and post-fire aerial photography, stand exams, TSMRS data, field survey and observation records, fire severity maps and data, road locations, geographical information system (GIS) data, research literature, and personal communication with numerous individuals knowledgeable about the area. The criteria used to determine which species not to carry forward for further analysis included; lack of habitat including required attributes, and lack of effects to the habitat of a species from any of the alternatives (Table 85; Exhibits Rs-7 through Rs-12). Species carried forward using this rationale were used for estimating the effects of the proposed alternatives.

**Table 85: Species and rationale for not being included in the effects analysis for the West Side Reservoir Post-Fire Project.**

Species	Rationale
Common Loon	No habitat occurs within the proposed areas, therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on loons or their habitat.
Flammulated Owl	No habitat occurs within the proposed areas, therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on flammulated owls or their habitat.
Harlequin Duck	No salvaging would occur in or near habitat for harlequin ducks, therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on harlequin ducks.
Northern Bog Lemming	Limited potential habitat occurs within the proposed areas, but there are no recent sightings in the vicinity, and no impacts on potential habitat. Therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on bog lemmings or their habitat.
Northern Leopard Frog	Limited potential habitat occurs within the proposed areas, but there are no recent sightings in the vicinity, and no impacts on potential habitat. Therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on leopard frogs or their habitat.
Peregrine Falcon	No nesting habitat in or adjacent to the proposed areas, therefore each of the alternatives would have No Impact on the peregrine falcon.

See Exhibits Rs-7 through Rs-12 for more information on the above species.